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RONALDO

World Player of the Year

The best ever?

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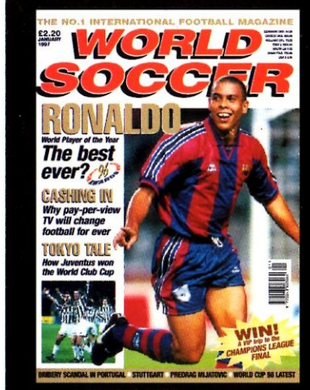

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Editor Keir Radnedge
Deputy Editor Gavin Hamilton
Art Editor Gary Payne
Picture Editor Duncan Bond
Editor-in-Chief Paul Hawksbee
Group Art Editor Stan McDonald
Editorial Secretary June Hiscock

Thanks this issue to:
John Kelly, Claire Nash,
Peter Neish, David Prole.

Editorial
TEL: 0171-261 5737
FAX: 0171-261 7474

Advertising Keamus Setna
Production Manager Tom Jennings
Publishing Director Andy McDuff
Publisher David J. Smith

Advertising
TEL: 0171-261 5499

Back Issues Department
TEL: 0181-503 0588

***WORLD SOCCER*,**
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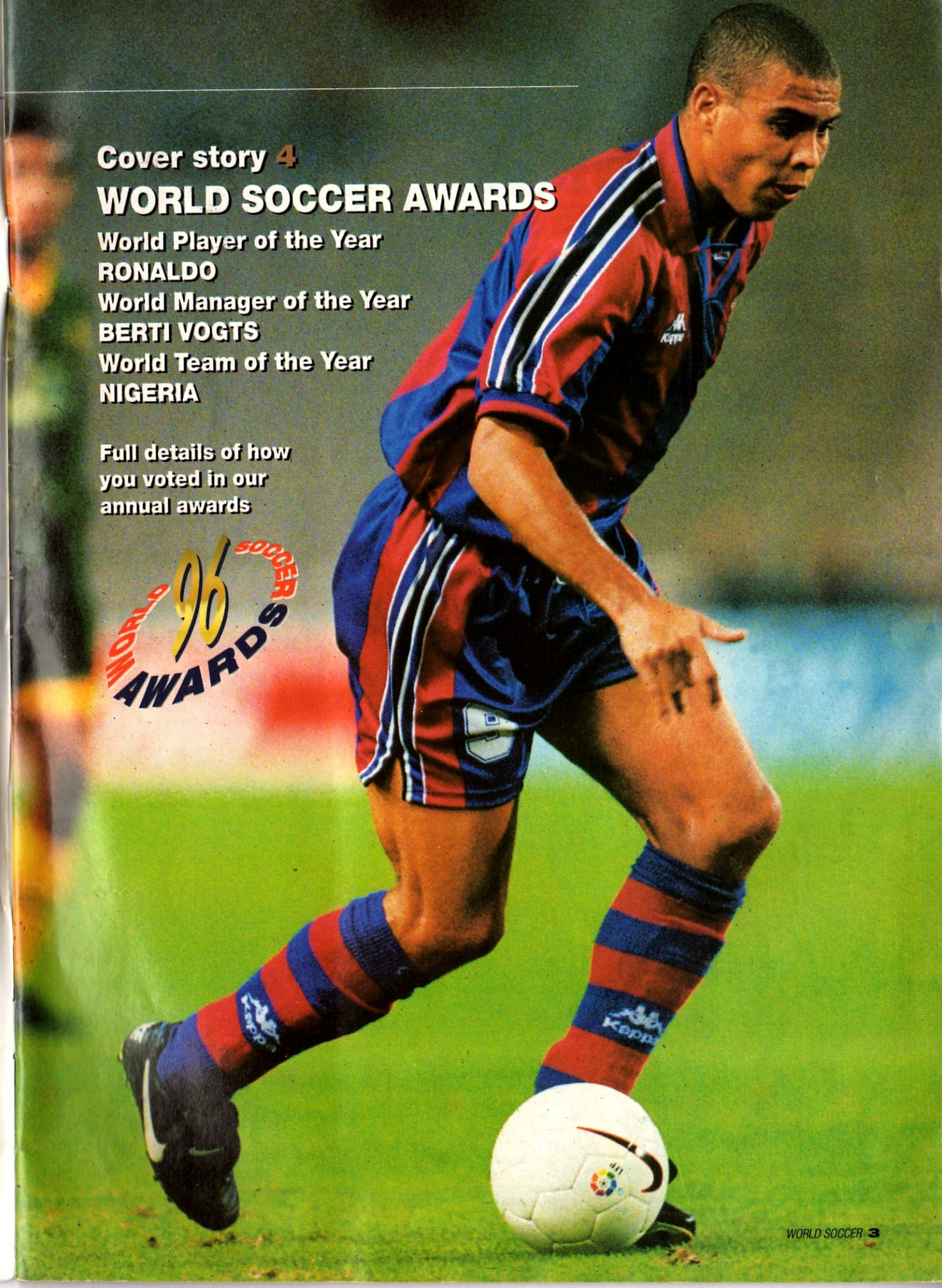

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World Player of the Year
RONALDO
World Manager of the Year
BERTI VOGTS
World Team of the Year
NIGERIA

Full details of how you voted in our annual awards

WORLD SOCCER 96 AWARDS

How you voted

HE will not be 21 until September, but according to many *WORLD SOCCER* readers he has already become the greatest player in the world. Ronaldo, who plays for Barcelona and Brazil, was a narrow winner in our 16th annual poll to find the top man.

He was followed in the voting by England's Alan Shearer and George Weah of Liberia, who plays his club football with Milan.

Nigeria, winners of the Olympic Games soccer tournament in the United States, took the team award. The flood of votes for Vogts, German coach Berti, ensured that he would beat all the other managers to the finishing line.

The poll emphasised yet again football's growing popularity around the globe. Readers from countries as diverse as Iraq, Madagascar, Greenland, Fiji and the Falklands took part, and there were nominations for 58 players, 47 teams and 60 managers.

The top 10 players represented nine countries, with Germany having two in Matthias Sammer and Jurgen Klinsmann, who were among their stars in the winning European Championship campaign during the summer.

Ronaldo is the youngest-ever winner, and the first unconnected with Italy either through club or country.

Shearer, narrowly beaten into second place, has had a great year, finishing as leading scorer in Euro 96 and becoming a major figure in the Newcastle revival.

The votes for other players included one for Tiffeny Milbrett, captain of the American women's team.

Vogts was a clear winner among the managers, but there was little to choose between the next four places. In the end they were occupied by Alex Ferguson, who guided Manchester United to a second Cup-and-League double; Raddy Antic, who surprised many by lasting more than a year under Jesus Gil's volatile ownership of Atletico Madrid and winning both League and Cup as well; Terry Venables, late of England; and Marcello Lippi of World and European champions Juventus.

Nigeria's Olympic victory helped to revive interest in the soccer sector of the Games, but the margin of their success in the *WORLD SOCCER* voting was perhaps a surprise in view of Germany's European triumph.

Juventus finished third, well clear of Manchester United.

DAVID PROLE

WORLD PLAYER OF THE YEAR	% of vote
1 Ronaldo (Barcelona & Brazil)	16.56
2 Alan Shearer (Newcastle & England)	14.42
3 George Weah (Milan & Liberia)	14.03
4 Matthias Sammer (Bor. Dortmund & Germany)	10.13
5 Jurgen Klinsmann (Bayern Munich & Germany)	8.18
6 Gabriel Batistuta (Fiorentina & Argentina)	7.01
7 Eric Cantona (Manchester United & France)	4.67
8 Nwankwo Kanu (Internazionale & Nigeria)	2.72
9 Jari Litmanen (Ajax & Finland)	2.14
10 Gianluca Vialli (Chelsea & Italy)	0.94
Others	18.12

WORLD MANAGER OF THE YEAR	
1 Berti Vogts (Germany)	27.68
2 Alex Ferguson (Manchester United)	10.52
3 Raddy Antic (Atletico Madrid)	8.96
4 Terry Venables (England)	8.18
5 Marcello Lippi (Juventus)	7.79
6 Louis Van Gaal (Ajax)	3.89
7 Dusan Uhrin (Czech Republic)	3.33
8 Guy Roux (Auxerre)	3.18
9 Jo Bonfrere (Nigeria)	2.92
10 Kevin Keegan (Newcastle)	2.33
Others	21.24

WORLD TEAM OF THE YEAR	
1 Nigeria	31.28
2 Germany	19.10
3 Juventus	14.61
4 Manchester United	3.26
5 Milan	3.18
6 Czech Republic	2.92
7 Atletico Madrid	2.72
8 England	2.33
9 Auxerre	1.75
10 Ajax	1.75
Others	14.03

RONALDO

WORLD PLAYER OF THE YEAR

RONALDO puts on a smile as he becomes the latest player to win the *WORLD SOCCER* award. "I want to be soccer's good boy," he says. "Drugs are out – training is in."

That is the attitude, in contrast to some, that will make him popular with dads and mums as well as with the younger element in Brazil, Spain – where he plays his club football – and in other countries, who would dearly like him to be performing before their domestic audiences.

"I'm flattered that people think I'm good," he says. "But I'm only just getting started. I have a lot to learn, and I don't want anything to stop me from learning it."

Ronaldo came up the traditional Brazilian way, playing in the streets and on waste ground in the Bento Ribeiro area of Rio. The story goes that he could not afford the bus fare for a trial at the Flamengo ground — and they let him go rather than give him the coppers he needed.

He went to Sao Cristavao, a small Second Division club, was spotted by 1970 World Cup hero Jairzinho, and sold to Cruzeiro of Belo Horizonte. After a spell in the youth team he won a senior place and scored 54 goals in his first 54 games. PSV headed the queue of European clubs anxious to sign him, and duly did so, but he was destined for a bigger audience than Eindhoven could provide.

After two seasons and 30 goals, in spite of a serious knee injury, he was on his way to Barcelona, signed by the Catalans earlier this year for a fee of $20million. That figure is second only to the £15m that took Alan Shearer from Blackburn to Newcastle, and it may well have been repaid by now. If not, it soon will be.

Ronaldo is already an experienced international, with 13 caps rewarding his speed, effortless control and wonderful finishing skill. His amazing goal for Barça against Compostela in October will surely rank with the most-shown goal in TV history by the time his career is over.

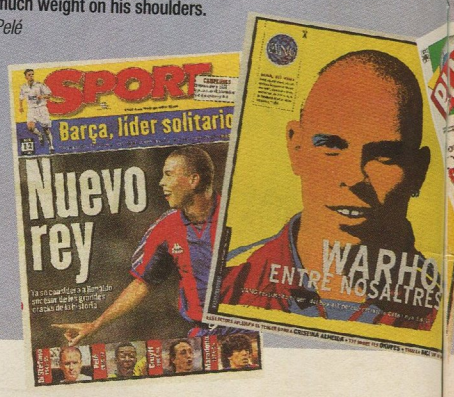
Not that such an event is likely for a long time to come. We shall be seeing a lot more of the kid who says: "I don't mind signing autographs, but what I really want to give the fans is a lot of goals."

Ronaldomania!

"You can go anywhere you like in the world, and you won't find a player who can score goals like Ronaldo. He's only 20 but can anybody, anywhere, show me a better player? He's simply sensational. *Barcelona coach Bobby Robson*

He's got all it takes to be a dignified successor to Pelé. He is already the best centre-forward in the world and he's got so much natural talent he can only get better and better. I'm convinced he's a footballer who is going to rewrite the history books. His greatest virtue is that he always takes the shortest route to goal, and his speed on the ball and dribbling are incredible. *Brazil coach Mario Zagalo*

An exquisite footballer who lives to score goals. It doesn't matter how you mark Ronaldo, it's impossible to intimidate him. He's got great confidence in his own ability and all the qualities to become a world-beater. But he's only just starting and it doesn't do him any favours comparing him to me all the time, it puts too much weight on his shoulders. *Pelé*



BERTI VOGTS

WORLD MANAGER OF THE YEAR

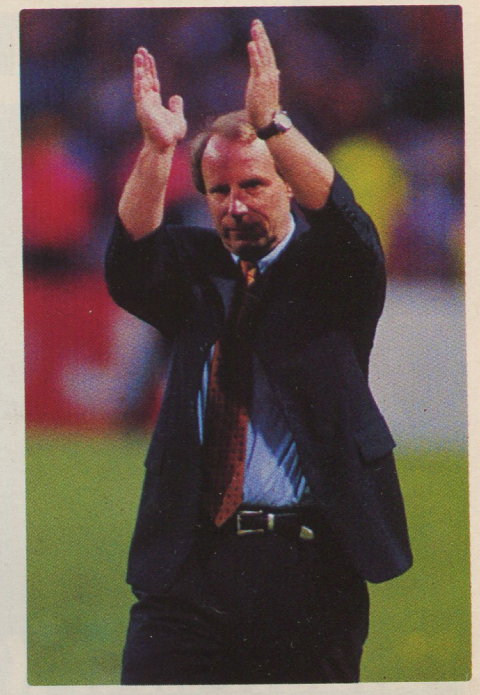
BERTI VOGTS has had his share of criticism since becoming Germany's national coach after the 1990 World Cup in Italy. But despite the speed with which the critics jump in, he has established himself as a worthy successor to such men as Sepp Herberger, Helmut Schoen, Jupp Derwall and Franz Beckenbauer, by taking his country to victory in Euro 96.

His reasons for the success? "Organisation, talent and hard work," he says. "Of the three, hard work is the most important."

Vogts, the player, had a fine career with Borussia Monchengladbach, winning five championships and a DfB Cup plus 96 caps, a World Cup and two UEFA cups, as well as being West German Footballer of the Year in 1971 and 1979.

He retired from playing when only 33, and went straight into the national squad set-up, without club experience, coaching the youth and under-21 squad before becoming 'Kaiser' Franz's assistant in 1986.

He is only just turned 50, and seems likely to stay in charge as long as he wants to, unless something goes badly wrong.



NIGERIA

WORLD TEAM OF THE YEAR

NIGERIA became the first team from outside Europe and South America to top the *WORLD SOCCER* poll, almost entirely on the strength of their showing in the Olympic Games. And they did that with an Under-23 team!

A lot of their success is down to Dutch coach Jo Bonfrere, who succeeded a fellow-countryman, Clemens Westerhof, sorted out some problems, and guided the team down a path on which they could express themselves as individuals and at the same time comply to a team pattern.

"They showed that there is a lot of talent in Africa as a whole, not just in Nigeria," said Bonfrere after his squad had beaten both Argentina and Brazil to take the Olympic title.

Before then, Nigeria had won the FIFA Under-17 title in both 1985 and 1993, and the African Nations Cup in 1980 and 1994, as well as going close to a place in the 1994 World Cup quarter-finals.

Can Africa be on the march, in football terms? If that is the case, then Nigeria are leading the way.

Unique, magic, the best goalscorer in the world, no argument. It's a genuine pleasure to play alongside him. He loves what he's doing and never stops smiling. Success will never go to his head. *Barcelona and Brazil team-mate Giovanni*

That was the most difficult marking job I've done in my life. I feel like I've just played five games. *Tenerife defender Cesar Gomez after 90 minutes with Ronaldo*

He scores goals when it matters, not just when his team are two or three goals ahead and the result is a foregone conclusion. He proved that against Valencia. He scores two, they equalise, so he picks the ball up on the halfway line and wins the game again. There is nobody else in the Spanish League on the same planet. *Deportivo coach John Toshack*

What's most impressive is his ability to pick the ball up in no man's land, where there is simply nothing on, and turn that into a goalscoring situation all on his own. He creates goals out of nothing. *Valencia and Spain keeper Andoni Zubizarreta*

Ronaldo is like a steamroller and a computer-generated Ferrari engine programmed to score. They say he's Brazilian, but he's so calculating, so overwhelmingly powerful and so capable of winning games on his own, he must be a Martian. *Valencia coach Jorge Valdano*

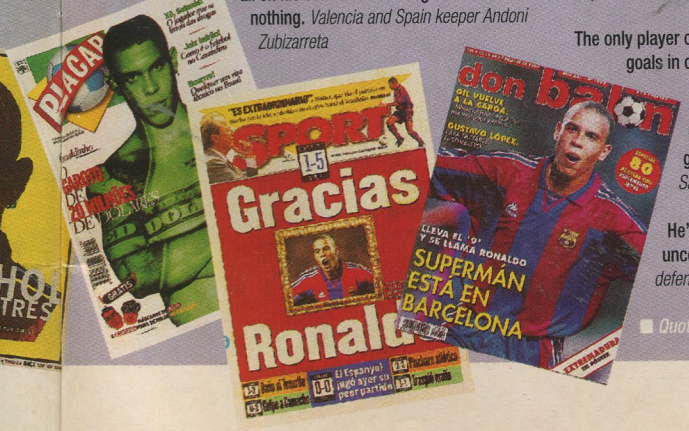
All the praise is exaggerated. It's not good for Ronaldo that people are setting him such standards because it's difficult to live up to that every game. He's playing extremely well at the moment, but it'll be years before he reaches the level of a Pelé or Di Stefano. *Johan Cruyff*

He's an extraordinary forward and a great kid – he deserves everything he gets. Barcelona have made one of their best signings ever, on a par with Maradona and Cruyff. *Brazil and Paris Saint-Germain full-back Leonardo*

He's the best player in the world. All he's missing are titles; and they'll soon come. I just wish he played for us. *World Cup-winner Mauro Silva of Deportivo La Coruna*

The only player capable of beating my Spanish record of 38 goals in one season. He's up there with Pelé, Maradona, Di Stefano and Kubala. When he gets the ball you can just tell from the look on his face he's going to score – he's got that bare-faced cheek of youth. *Hugo Sanchez, five-tmes top scorer in Spain*

He's like a ping-pong ball – uncontrollable! *Barcelona and France defender Laurent Blanc*



Quotes compiled by JEFF KING in Barcelona

PREVIOUS WINNERS

WORLD PLAYER OF THE YEAR

1982 .....Paolo Rossi (Juventus & Italy)
1983 .....Zico (Udinese & Brazil)
1984 .....Michel Platini (Juventus & France)
1985 .....Michel Platini (Juventus & France)
1986 .....Diego Maradona (Napoli & Argentina)
1987 .....Ruud Gullit (Milan & Holland)
1988 .....Marco Van Basten (Milan & Holland)
1989 .....Ruud Gullit (Milan & Holland)
1990 .....Lothar Matthaus (Internazionale & Germany)
1991 .....Jean-Pierre Papin (Marseille & France)
1992 .....Marco Van Basten (Milan & Holland)
1993 .....Roberto Baggio (Juventus & Italy)
1994 .....Paolo Maldini (Milan & Italy)
1995 .....Gianluca Vialli (Juventus & Italy)

WORLD MANAGER OF THE YEAR

1982 .....Enzo Bearzot (Italy)
1983 .....Sepp Piontek (Denmark)
1984 .....Michel Hidalgo (France)
1985 .....Terry Venables (Barcelona)
1986 .....Guy Thys (Belgium)
1987 .....Johan Cruyff (Ajax)
1988 .....Rinus Michels (Holland & Bayer Leverkusen)
1989 .....Arrigo Sacchi (Milan)
1990 .....Franz Beckenbauer (West Germany)
1991 .....Michel Platini (France)
1992 .....Richard Moller Nielsen (Denmark)
1993 .....Alex Ferguson (Manchester United)
1994 .....Carlos Alberto Parreira (Brazil)
1995 .....Louis Van Gaal (Ajax)

WORLD TEAM OF THE YEAR

1982 .....Brazil
1983 .....Hamburg
1984 .....France
1985 .....Everton
1986 .....Argentina
1987 .....FC Porto
1988 .....Holland
1989 .....Milan
1990 .....West Germany
1991 .....France
1992 .....Denmark
1993 .....Parma
1994 .....Milan
1995 .....Ajax